1: Jochelson E-5 (1900-01) 1908 RY4 Koryak RY4



The Koryak tribe, taken as a whole, is at present, after the Chukchee, the healthiest of all the tribes of northeastern Siberia. Of the influence of civilization upon them, I shall speak in the last chapter.

THE SENSES. — The Koryak discriminate between people of their own tribe and those of another by their smell. Thus, for instance, they cannot stand the smell of a Russian house or of a Tungus tent. And I can say for myself, that, after an intercourse of many years with various Siberian tribes, I was able to recognize the characteristic smell of a Yukaghir, a Tungus, or a Yakut.

Their vision is very keen. They are able to distinguish objects, and recognize persons, at a distance at which I can see nothing. Near-sightedness is rare among them; and one would hardly find among them an instance of looking through half-closed eyes, so characteristic of near-sighted people. I did, however, meet with two or three cases of near-sightedness. Such persons felt helpless, and did not go out hunting, nor did they drive the first sledge of a train.

The Koryak dislike salty and bitter things. While the Yukaghir, Yakut, and Tungus frequently came to us for salt, the Koryak seemed to feel no need for it. Those people to whom I gave mustard to taste expectorated for quite a while.

They are very fond of hard biscuit; but many of them prefer the fresh, slightly sour rye bread baked by the Russians of that locality, and which I carried with me in a frozen state in bags. Before meal-time they put the bread before the fire to thaw it out. The sour and pungent taste of putrid fish and decomposing meat seems to tickle the Koryak palate.

They are very fond of sweet things, and sugar is in the greatest demand among articles of exchange. They compare the taste of sugar to that of reindeer-fat, or to the taste of the marrow of the reindeer leg-bones.

The Koryak like fat in all forms; as, for instance, fish-oil, reindeer-fat, the blubber of sea-animals, and the fat of other animals, but they cannot consume it in such quantities as the Yakut consume melted butter. Excessive use of the blubber of the spotted-seal (*Phoca ochotensis*) produces vomiting; and many of them cannot bear the smell of the blubber of the male of the ringed-seal.

The Koryak distinguish the following colors, — black and dark blue (called by one name, nu'uqen), white (ne'lhaqen), red (naye'čeqen), green, light blue, and coffee-color (nota'lhayeqen), and yellow (mali'čeqen). When they are shown (for instance, on printed calico) the various colors intermediary between those enumerated, they class them among one or another of the above. Red is regarded as the most beautiful color. Faces with ruddy cheeks are considered handsome. Soft light-brown hair and brown eyes are valued as marks of feminine beauty. Dark eyes and coarse black hair in a woman are looked upon as signs of ill-nature.